

Making Sense of *Hijāb* and *Niqāb* in Contemporary Western Societies

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Abstract: *Hijāb*, an Islamic ethico-religious and socio-cultural symbol, is increasingly becoming visible in the Western public arena giving rise to a debate over its compatibility with dominant Western culture and values. Placing it in an argumentative genre, the paper highlights the sociological, religious and cultural rationales for the increasing visibility of the Islamic dress code among young Muslim women. It provides a discursive framework based on a cultural sociology through which *hijāb* and *niqāb* could be accepted.

Key words: *hijāb*, *niqāb*, *hijābphobia*, multiculturalism, democracy

There has recently been a heated debate over the compatibility of *hijāb/niqāb*, the Islamic modest dress, with contemporary Western culture and values. Translated as veil and face veil respectively, *hijāb* and *niqāb* serve as the battleground for a perceived “conflict of cultures” in many Western societies. *Hijāb* is considered a dangerous, provocative symbol that challenges a way of behaving that is considered normal and usual in contemporary secular Western societies. It is often seen as a symbol of oppression and subjugation of women in Islam as portrayed by Fatima Mernissi who, among others, is the typical Western source of reference for the study of *hijāb* and *niqāb*.¹

Niqāb (from *naqaba*) refers to making a hole. In Islamic jurisprudence, it refers to the face veil or garment covering the face

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and whole body except the eyes.² *Hijāb* (from *hajaba*) refers to a thing that veils, conceals, covers, protects or denies penetration between two things.³ As al-Aṣḫānī and al-Naysābūrī explain, it is used in the Qur’ān to refer to a variety of meanings, all of which revolve around its etymology.⁴ As a Muslim woman’s code of dress, *hijāb* refers to a loose cloth worn by a woman to cover her ‘*awrah*’ (parts of the body that should be covered) from *non-maḥram* men (*maḥram* refers to an unmarried kin).⁵ It is a veil used to cover all parts of the body except the face and hands. In contemporary feminist and political discourse, it is increasingly used interchangeably with *khimār*, a headscarf that covers woman’s hair along with the neck and bosom.

This paper examines the sociological, religious and cultural justifications for *niqāb* and *hijāb* from the perspective of cultural sociology. It begins with a brief description of *hijābphobia* in the West and some Muslim countries followed by an examination of the debate in religious and cultural contexts. Though the reference point for the discussion is the U.S., Canada and Europe, the arguments advanced in this paper apply equally to other Western as well as “Westernised” Muslim and non-Muslim societies.

Hijābphobia

Hijāb has been the subject of the debate for a long time in the West. Some people in the West have accused *hijāb* of being a mark of separation and hence call for it to be abandoned. Many argue that *hijāb* is a religious symbol which is contrary to the notion of secularism and modernisation. Muslims wearing *hijāb* are subject to snide remarks and looks. The *hijābphobia* started in Europe but soon spread to other countries, including some secular Muslim countries. Some Muslim countries internalised the Western colonial stance on the veil as a symbol of backwardness. Reza Shah of Iran, in 1936, outlawed the wearing of the veil. It was decreed that Muslim women should dress the way Western women do. Taxi drivers could be fined if they carried veiled passengers. Police were instructed to prosecute all those who did not desist from wearing the veil and to tear off the veil from their heads. Somewhat later, when scarves were known to be fashionable in Europe, a little laxity was permitted.⁶ Yet in 2004, an American woman of Turkish descent, named Kavakci/

Kawakji, was expelled from the Turkish Grand National Assembly and her citizenship was revoked as she appeared for the swearing-in ceremony wearing a *hijāb*.⁷ As Nilufer Gole observes, the headscarf has been “perceived as a symbol of backwardness, ignorance, and subservience not only in the Western context, but also by many of the public in Muslim countries engaging with the values of secularism and gender liberty.”⁸

Hijāb arouses a sense of both sympathy and antipathy from the host communities. Muslim women are accustomed to hearing such expression as “this is Canada. You’re free here. You don’t have to wear that thing on your head.” Those who insist on wearing *hijāb* or *niqāb* willingly for religious reasons would be ridiculed and told “if you have chosen to cover, well, you have been socialised to believe covering is a good thing. However, if you really knew your interest as a woman, you would know that it is not good to cover, so your decision to cover is a sad indication of your being brainwashed.”⁹ Veiling is not inimical to classical Western tradition. Brayer points out that in the Rabbinic tradition, it is unbecoming of a Jewish woman to go out with her head uncovered: “it is not like the daughters of Israel to walk out with heads uncovered” and “Cursed be the man who lets the hair of his wife be seen.”¹⁰ In the New Testament, it is stated that “if a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or shaved off, she should cover her head.” (I Corinthians 11:6).

A modern Western woman finds herself in a completely different setting. Some Western feminist writers have demonstrated that women in contemporary Western societies are taught from the early childhood that their worth is proportional to their physical attractiveness to the male gaze. According to Bartky, most women have internalized the sexually obsessed mindset of males, letting “a panoptical male connoisseur” reside within their own consciousness so that they appear “perpetually before his gaze and under his judgment. Woman lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other.”¹¹ In his study of the female nude in the history of Western painting, Berger observes that:

Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only

most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of women in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—most particularly an object of vision: a sight.¹²

Commenting on this, Bullock adds that “not only does the woman internalize the male gaze and judge herself with the eyes of his desires, but also women then turn to one another and judge one another with those male eyes.”¹³

Critical of this popular consumer capitalist culture, some Western women, including some feminist writers, resent valuing women for their sexual appearance over other aspects of their personhood. According to them, “to expose their sexuality means that others will deny them their personhood.”¹⁴ As a result, these women have devised various strategies to desexualise themselves and make public space easier to negotiate. Some would alter their dress and some would shave off their hair so that they might not look sexually attractive to men’s gaze. Others have engaged in pathological eating behaviours, such as bulimia (compulsive eating) that can make a woman so fat or anorexia (compulsive dieting) that can make her so thin, as to be seen as undesirable by men.¹⁵ To be sure, *hijāb* is not one of the alternatives on the table.

Instead of choosing any of these abnormal behaviors, Muslim women have turned to *hijāb* for solace. They have found it healthier, allowing them to eat but not pathologically, and less drastic than shaving one’s hair.¹⁶ To many *hijāb*-wearing Muslim women in the West, *hijāb* is a way of giving dignity to a woman’s femininity by discouraging unwelcome sexual attention and making her beauty (something very precious to her) unavailable to an uninvited guest or public consumption. It functions to “define Muslim identity, perform a behaviour check, resist sexual objectification, [and] afford more respect....”¹⁷ This trend of reclaiming women’s rights within the Islamic *Shari’ah* matrices is what is often referred to as “Islamic Feminism.” It aims to redress some Muslim’s maltreatment of women. It also defends women’s rights in Islam against the criticism of some Western and secular Muslim feminists. In the forefront of such activism are: Zaynab al-Ghazali al-Jubayli who headed the women’s chapter of the Muslim Brotherhood and Dr. Katherine Bullock, a Canadian convert to Islam since 1994.

Viewed within such a social background, wearing *hijāb* should not be seen as preposterous. Why should it be wrong for a woman to take one step forward by wearing *niqāb* as an increasing number of women have taken two steps backward in nudity? In response to the increasing popularising and communalisation of women's bodies, there are Muslim women—natives and immigrants—who willingly, and occasionally against the wishes of their parents or husbands, decide to wear *hijāb* or *niqāb* in order to emphasise their womanhood and religiosity over their sexuality.¹⁸

Religious Dimension

Religiously, *hijāb* and *niqāb* are grounded in Islamic *Sharī'ah*. There are, at least, four relevant verses that have direct or indirect bearing on the question. The first one is stated in *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*, 33:59. This verse is cited in relation to women's gowns/garments which should be loose. The second relevant verse is in *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*, 33:53 which forbids entry into Prophet Muhammad (SAW)'s house without prior permission and enjoins talking, if needed, to his wives from behind the screen. The third verse mentioned in *Sūrat al-Nūr*, 24:60 is related to the elderly women who are *post-menopausal*. The last verse with a direct bearing on the issue is stated in *Sūrat al-Nūr*: "And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers...." (24:31). This verse is the main reference to women's code of dress in Islam.

Based on the generally accepted interpretation of the last verse, the *'awrah* of a woman with respect to *non-maḥram* men is her entire body with the exception of her face and hands, some would even include the feet.¹⁹ Obviously, the Qur'ān does not elaborate on the parts of the body that fall under "*illā mā zahara minhā*" (except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof) (*Sūrat al-Nūr*, 24:31). But it is known from the Prophetic Sunnah, the second source of legislation in Islam after the Qur'ān, that the face and hands are excluded from the *'awrah*. Numerous *aḥadīth* (pl. of *ḥadīth*) support that meaning. One such *ḥadīth* is reported from 'Ā'ishah that her sister Asmā' once came to the Prophet (SAW) clad in transparent

clothes which revealed her body. The Prophet (SAW) averted his gaze and told her, "... when a woman begins to menstruate, nothing should be seen of her except this and this," and he pointed to his face and hands.²⁰

Regarding the *niqāb*, many scholars defend its religiousity (on the basis of emulating the Prophet's wives' dress) but hold that it is not obligatory. Thus, there is no need to force a Muslim woman to wear it on religious ground.²¹ Nevertheless, as al-Qaraḍāwī points out, it is unfair to accuse a *niqāb*-wearing woman of "religious extremism" simply *because* she has adopted a literal interpretation of certain verses or a "hard-line" juristic opinion of certain *fuqahā'* who consider *niqāb* obligatory. People naturally differ on this matter, as did even the Prophet's companions. Some companions followed the minimum requirements of religion while others followed the maximum ones. Yet, both groups are within the ambit of Islamic *Sharī'ah*. Unfortunately, a person whose knowledge of, and commitment to, Islam is little, or who has been brought up in an environment that neglects *Sharī'ah*, will certainly consider even the minimal adherence to Islam as a kind of extremism.²²

There is a remarkable story about the occasion of revelation (*sabab al-nuzūl*) of the verse 33:59 of *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb* cited above. The Qur'ān's commentators explained that the verse was revealed to help Muslim women in the Prophet's time, who used to come out of their houses at night, to be identified as believing free women and not as slaves who were then subject to harassment and molestation by a group of corrupt young men in Madīnah.²³ Extrapolating from that premise, some contemporary writers who are antagonistic to *ḥijāb/niqāb* argue that the verse in question should be understood as stressing the ethical issue raised by it rather than serving as a general prescription about the regulation of dress. This is due to the fact that there is no more distinction between free women and slave girls in the Islam of today. Stated otherwise, it means that there is no need for today's women to put on *ḥijāb/niqāb* as there exists no distinction between the free women and slaves since slavery has long been abolished.

While it is true that a given verse is not to be understood out of its socio-historical context in which it was revealed, it is also true that in the case of parallel contexts, such a verse may equally apply.

Here, the legal maxim *al-‘ibrah bi-‘umūm al-lafẓ lā bi-khuṣūṣ al-sabab* (the consideration is for the generality of the wording and not for the specificity of the cause) applies.²⁴ Rather than serving the critics’ viewpoint, that occasion of revelation could make *ḥijāb/niqāb* relevant to the contemporary time as ever before. It can be argued that the commercialisation of today’s girls is another, and indeed a “modern” type of “slavery.” In the Western capitalist consumer cultures, as Bordo (a Western feminist writer) observes, women’s subordination takes on a different, subtler form. The social system that promotes the “tyranny of slenderness,” according to her, keeps women “docile,” preoccupied with their bodies and locked into a subordinate position where female desire (unlike male desire) is not given the free reign; rather it is controlled and restrained by the need to be slim. Given that social setting, *ḥijāb/niqāb* can be viewed afresh as a way of emancipation from the shackles of the beauty game and the commercialisation and objectification of the female body and its use in pornography and advertising.²⁵

Because some Muslim women are born and reared in secular communities, they think and feel ridiculous when wearing *ḥijāb* and thus consider *ḥijāb* anathema to the modern society. In a recent BBC programme, a journalist, who appeared to be of Muslim descent, relentlessly argued against *ḥijāb*, and concluded that “I don’t want it, my mother never wants it, my grandmother never wants it.... It is not in the Qur’ān.”²⁶ In this way, she has confounded the question of “is” with the question of “ought to”. How things are do not necessarily mean how they should be. That some Muslim sisters revolted against *ḥijāb* does not mean that *ḥijāb* is not mentioned in the Qur’ān. That one’s mother, grandmother or great grandmother did not wear it does not mean that wearing it is unIslamic. Islam is not ancestor worship and one’s *‘Ādah* or *‘Urf* (custom or tradition) becomes one of the secondary sources of Islamic law only if it does not contradict *al-naṣṣ* (the Qur’ānic or Prophetic textual ruling) as entrenched in Islamic jurisprudence.²⁷ As a failure to distinguish between both statements (the question of “is” and the question of “ought to”), the action to be corrected has become the corrective action, turning things upside down.

More visible within the Muslim communities in the West, particularly in the United States, is to see young Muslim women

putting on *hijāb* based on conscious decision, creating identities that are distinct from their more assimilating and Americanised parents that offer them their own forms of autonomy. In their recently published research, Rhys Williams and Gira Vashi explored the context, meanings and consequences of wearing *hijāb*, and reported that *hijāb* enabled young Muslim women to negotiate their Islamic values in a secular society and carve out a cultural space to live lives that their mothers could barely have imagined and still be publicly Muslim.

Using data from interviews and observations with well-educated American Muslim women from Indian, Pakistani and Arab families, these researchers found that second-generation Muslim women are negotiating social and religious identities in contrast to both their immigrant families who do not always put on *hijāb* and non-Muslim Americans.²⁸ As reported in their study, one woman, for example, explained that going to college, meeting more Muslims, and continuing to learn more about her religion persuaded her to begin to cover: “It wasn’t really taught to me. My mom doesn’t wear it, my grandma doesn’t wear it. No one wears it. But I found out—I researched, I talked to people—just one day it hit me and I decided to wear it.”²⁹

It is tempting to discredit *hijāb* on the ground that it belongs to an earlier date than Islam which was practised in the Jewish tradition and later in the Christian tradition, especially in the Catholic Church, and now reduced to the nuns’ code of dress. It is argued that a Muslim is required not to comply with Jewish or Christian customs; he/she is also not to imitate a nation in things that have bearing on rituals; otherwise he/she will be considered as one of them.

Far from it, *hijāb* is rooted in the primary sources of Islamic legislation (the Qur’ān and Sunnah) and Muslim women are not following the Jews or Christians. If there is any similarity between them, it is only because the ultimate source of their respective religions is Almighty Allah (SWT). Furthermore, to negate all actions performed by Jews and Christians simply because they have done them, many Islamic teachings would crumble. Muslim fasting will be invalid because Jews and Christians have their respective ways of fasting as alluded to in the Qur’ān (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:183). In fact, the unity of God will also be a mere imitation and thus

meaningless because the same doctrine had been proclaimed in the Bible as the Qur'ān testifies (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:133; *Sūrat al-Anbiyā'*, 21:25). Things must be put in their rightful perspectives.

Because it is a religious duty, *hijāb* is worn by Muslim women to perform *ṣalāh* (prayer) even if only temporarily. It is very rare for a woman to pray leaving her head and bosom uncovered. Now if it is wrong to pray without *hijāb* on the ground that one is performing an *'ibādah* that could earn one a reward from God, it must also be wrong to go out without it for the same reason. Just as praying in the mosque or at home can earn one a reward, engaging in all walks of life can also earn one a similar reward. Islam is not only a religion of the mosque or home, but also a religion of the office and marketplace. *Taqwā* (piety, God consciousness), a central Islamic moral precept, is not simply a meditative state which confines one to the mosque or isolates one from the world, but is a provision for finding one's way through the world.

The Right to Culture

When "culture" is construed as "the totality of ways by which men create designs for living,"³⁰ *hijāb* and *niqāb* might be regarded as a cultural symbol of the Muslims. The right to culture or cultural rights is generally seen as part of human rights recognised by the United Nations and international law. Article 5 of UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) states that "Cultural rights are an integral part of human rights, which are universal, indivisible and interdependent."³¹ Such universal human rights do not impose one cultural standard of any particular region or set of traditions, but represent the hard-won consensus of the international community. The United Nations Charter commits the United Nations and all Member States to action promoting "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms." Paragraph 1 of Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that: "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits."³²

Similar recognition is stated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations (1976). Article 15 recognises the right of everyone "to take part in cultural

life.” To achieve the full realisation of this right (along with the right to scientific, literary and artistic productions), the same Article recommends the parties to the Covenant to take steps “necessary for the conservation, the development and the diffusion of science and culture.”³³ While the right to culture is well attested to, however, that right must not violate or infringe on another human right or culture. No right can be used at the expense or destruction of another.³⁴

The question of ensuring universal human rights in a culturally diverse world has been addressed from various perspectives. What is clear is that many Western countries are proud to be multicultural in modern history. Canada was the first country to institute an official policy of multiculturalism and is probably the only one to have a law recognising the cultural diversity of its population.³⁵ The United States has superbly accommodated an extraordinary number of people from many different backgrounds. Respect for multiculturalism and minority rights is one of the conditions and criteria that countries must meet to enter the EU and NATO.³⁶

Most of the philosophical foundations of these Universal Declarations, as A.H. Robertson observes, are based on the liberal democratic tradition of Western Europe.³⁷ Since most of these declarations are not opposed to Islamic values, it is reasonable to invoke them as the common ground for discourse on *ḥijāb* or *niqāb*. Culturally, *niqāb* has been well accepted and appreciated within many Muslim communities particularly in the Arabian Peninsula. As indicated above, in Islamic Jurisprudence, *‘urf* is legally binding as long as it does not contradict any principle in the Qur’ān or Sunnah.

While man’s *‘awrah* is only from his navel to his knee, culture requires going beyond this minimum requirement. It is unbecoming of a person to go to an informal ceremony, let alone a formal one, without wearing a dress that often covers more than the said *‘awrah*. As demonstrated above, the *‘awrah* of a woman with respect to *non-maḥram* men is her entire body with the exception of her face and hands. Yet some cultures require covering a little bit farther, due to one reason or another. This supposedly cultural interpretation of the basic Qur’ānic requirement for the code of dress of male and female has been positively appreciated for centuries.

However, it is possible to advance a cultural argument against *hijāb* within the dominant Western cultures. Cultural androgyny, such as women wearing men's dress, is said to constitute equal rights in Western culture, and thus any outward manifestations of difference is considered as inequality.³⁸ Moreover, since a woman is presumably conventionally expected to be the object of the male gaze, this established pattern of 'male looking/female "being looked-at-ness"' would be "disturbed" or "disrupted" by *hijāb/niqāb*.³⁹

Such an argument is logical, in a sense, but it compromises at least two idolized ideals upon which the modern Western societies are based. To require a Muslim woman to expose what is religiously required to be covered compromises the Western ideal of secularity and the freedom of religion. The separation of church and state has been integral to the structure of most Western countries.⁴⁰ To ask a Muslim woman to remove her *niqāb* which is required by her culture, compromises multiculturalism which the Western societies are fond of. If the West has helped in bringing some people out of their culture to live in the West and is now attempting to bring their culture out of them, what then will remain with these people? This phenomenon of what may be referred to as "Global monoculture" is part of cultural globalization, aiming to homogenise the world cultures based upon the Western norms. It tantamounts to the death of cultural diversity. As stated in UNESCO's *Cultural Rights as Human Rights*, the uniformity which is imposed upon culture by the consumer society and its impoverishment by the intensive advertising of false standards and values is a threat to the development of living cultures.⁴¹ Article 1 of UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) states the following:

As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations.⁴²

The right to culture is not merely the right to preserve one's culture but also the right to exercise it. Otherwise, a cultural manifestation incapable of being used becomes a dying culture which will soon sink into oblivion. Article 6 of UNESCO "Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity," (2001) states that "while ensuring the free flow

of ideas by word and image, care should be exercised that all cultures can express themselves and make themselves known.”⁴³ *Hijāb*, as Williams and Vashi acknowledge, is a religious and social symbol that has multiple meanings: “it provides a clear identity marker at a life-course transitional time, and it provides culturally legitimate space for young women who are formulating Muslim-American identities.”⁴⁴ Bullock has made this cultural ground for *hijāb* very clear when she writes:

Muslim women in the West find other compelling reasons to wear *hijāb*, one of which is to assert their Muslim identity publicly and with pride, something which is especially important to them as citizens of Western, multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious polities.⁴⁵

The basic principle of tolerance requires that “religious beliefs, the persons holding those beliefs and the practices directly connected with these beliefs should be tolerated as long as they do not constitute any harm to the public order.”⁴⁶ *Hijāb* or *niqāb*, it has been argued, does not harm others or pose a threat to social security. True, there are occasional crimes committed under the garb of *niqāb*. But similar, if not more heinous, crimes have been committed by others who are not wearing *niqāb*. Indeed, some would purposefully wear sexy, transparent clothing in order to seduce others. Thus, there is no point in citing these isolated incidents as a pretext for justifying *niqābphobia*.

Finally, there is no gainsaying that wearing *hijāb* indicates a certain degree of male-female difference. Though both genders have been regarded in the Qur’ān as equal on many accounts (see for example, *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*, 33:35), they are not equal in their biological dispositions and their physiological structures are not the same. As Murtaza Mutahhari observes, the desire to show off and display one’s self is a particular trait of women.⁴⁷ In the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English* (2003), the word “pageant” is defined as “a competition for young women in which their beauty, personal qualities and skills are judged;”⁴⁸ and “beauty contest” is defined as “a competition to choose the most beautiful from a group of women.”⁴⁹ It is highly uncommon to see males competing in a beauty pageant or a beauty contest as females do. The simple reason for this is that the female body has more parts

that are attractive than those of the male body. Unfortunately, some males at times exploit and take advantage of those attractive parts to satisfy their untamed lust.

On that account, the parts of the female body required to be covered are more than those of the male body. Nevertheless, both male and female are equally required to lower their gaze while looking at the opposite gender and guard their sexual parts as stated in *Sūrat al-Nūr*, 24:30. Other than that, in the case of necessity or emergency, women's *'awrah* can be exposed, because "necessity overrules prohibition" as enacted in Islamic Law.

Conclusion

Hijāb or *niqāb* has multiple meanings, and signifies a variety of things for women who wear it. Some wear it as a religious duty; others wear it for social or cultural reasons, and still others wear it for fashion or simply to be in the good company of her *hijāb/niqāb*-wearing friends or colleagues. While it is true that minority groups are expected to respect and, to some degree, conform to the dominant culture, it is also true that they are not expected to assimilate entirely to the norms of the dominant culture. For moderate but committed Muslim women, a cultural symbol fused with or grounded in religious teaching will be the last thing to sacrifice, particularly in a socio-historical context that promotes sexuality over the personality which devalues everything *hijāb* stands for.

It must be reiterated that a Muslim woman is expected to be chaste and modest, especially when interacting with the opposite gender. With *hijāb* or *niqāb*, she can control her sight (*baṣar*) while leaving her insight (*baṣīrah*) wide open. However, *hijābphobia* or *niqābphobia* prevents people from exploring and seeing the meaningfulness of *hijāb* and *niqāb* at least through the eyes and minds of those who willingly and consciously wear them.

Finally, *hijābphobia* runs counter to the Western ideals of democracy, tolerance, openness, multiculturalism and transparency. The Muslim demands for *hijāb/niqāb* in the West may be construed as a test to see the extent to which the West adheres to its own ideals and permits free play to a powerful, living cultural and religious symbol.

Notes

1. See Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); idem, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1991). For a critique of these books, see Katherine Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical & Modern Stereotype* (Herndon: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2002), ch. iv.

2. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lasān al-'Arab*, vol. 14 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 1999), 249; Muḥammad Rawwās Qal'ajī and Ḥāmid Ṣādiq Qunaybī, *Dictionary of Islamic Legal Terminology: Arabic-English* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1988), 486.

3. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, vol. 3, 50-51; Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: William and Norgate, 1984), 1:516.

4. See al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, *Al-Mufradāt fī Gharib al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1999), 115; Ismā'il ibn Aḥmad al-Naysābūrī, *Wujūh al-Qur'ān* (Damascus: Dār al-Saqā, 1996), 122-123.

5. "Maḥram" denotes a relationship either by close blood ties or by marriage of such degree that marriage is permanently prohibited). See Qal'ajī and Qunaybī, *Dictionary of Islamic Legal Terminology*, 174.

6. Eliz Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran: Mutiny, Appeasement, and Repression from 1900 to Khomeini* (New York: Praeger, 1983), 62-63; Minou Reeves, *Female Warriors of Allah: Women and the Islamic Revolution* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1989), 85.

7. Saleem Qureshi, "Headscarf Dilemma is Tangled in Politics," *ExpressNews - University of Alberta*, June 4, 2004 [Online] available at <http://www.expressnews.ualberta.ca/article.cfm?id=5861>, accessed on February 1, 2007.

8. Cited in Nusrat Choudhury, "From the Stasi Commission to the European Court of Human Rights: L'affaire Du Foulard and the Challenge of Protecting the Rights of Muslim Girls," *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law*, 16, no. 1 (2007): 221-222.

9. Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil*, 214.

10. Menachem M. Brayer, *The Jewish Woman in Rabbinic Literature: A Psychosocial Perspective* (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav Publishing House, 1986), 239.

11. Sandral L. Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," in *Feminism & Foucault: Reflection on Resistance*, eds. Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 72.

12. John Berger et al., *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC and Penguin, 1972), 47.
13. Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil*, 187.
14. Susie Orbach, *Fat is a Feminist Issue: A Self-Help Guide for Compulsive Eaters* (New York: Berkeley Books, 1979), 52.
15. Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil*, 196-199.
16. *Ibid.*, 199.
17. R.A. Droogsma, "Redefining Hijab: American Muslim Women's Standpoints on Veiling," *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 35, no. 3 (2007): 294.
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